



**REAP**



# THE LGBTQ+ STUDENT DIVIDE

**The State of Sexual and Gender  
Minority Students at Taxpayer-Funded  
Christian Colleges**

EXHIBIT B

A Religious Exemption Accountability  
Project/College Pulse Study



**COLLEGE PULSE**

**March 2021**

## ABOUT US

### About COLLEGE PULSE

College Pulse is a survey research and analytics company dedicated to understanding the attitudes, preferences, and behaviors of today's college students. College Pulse offers custom data-driven marketing and research solutions, utilizing its unique American College Student Panel™ that includes over 485,000 undergraduate college student respondents from more than 1,500 two- and four-year colleges and universities in all 50 states.

For more information, visit <https://collegepulse.com> or College Pulse's official Twitter account @CollegeInsights.

### About the RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT (REAP)

REAP empowers queer, trans and non-binary students at religious colleges, universities and schools where discrimination and abuse is practiced using taxpayer money. As a program sponsored by the national nonprofit Soulforce, REAP elevates the experiences of sexual and gender minority students through civil rights litigation, documentary film, oral history, research and public policy.

For more information, visit [www.thereap.org](http://www.thereap.org)



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One-third of the more than 2,000 four-year undergraduate institutions in America are religiously affiliated. Of those, more than 200 Christian colleges and universities, with a combined student population nearing one million, explicitly discriminate against their LGBTQ+ students. This discrimination directly affects hundreds of thousands of LGBTQ+ students at these Christian colleges and universities. Data from a new survey reveals that 12% of students identify as LGBTQ+, and nearly one-third (30%) of students at these Christian colleges and universities describe experiencing some amount of non-heterosexual attraction or experience.

Students at today's Christian colleges identify with a broad array of different sexualities and gender identities, including bisexual, lesbian, gay, queer, same-sex attracted, asexual, non-binary, intersex, agender, genderqueer, and transgender. This report refers to this broad array of identities using the terms LGBTQ+ or sexual and gender minorities.

Results from this report reveal that sexual and gender minority students experience considerable challenges because of how they identify. From their rates of self-reported depression, anxiety, loneliness, suicidality, sexual assault and harassment, and substance abuse, to their inability to be open about their sexuality or gender identity for fear of rejection and condemnation from their campus community, sexual and gender minority students face significant obstacles that create markedly different and inferior college experiences. Some sexual and gender minority students face mandatory counselling, reparative therapy, and loss of campus privileges when their identities are revealed to school administrators.

The Religious Exemption Accountability Project (REAP) commissioned College Pulse to undertake a national poll of college student experiences on Christian colleges and universities to better understand the experiences of LGBTQ+ students at these campuses. Conducted from January 28 - February 6, 2021, findings from "The LGBTQ+ Student Divide: the State of Sexual and Gender Minority Students at Taxpayer-Funded Christian Colleges" represent a sample of 3,000 full-time students currently enrolled in four-year degree programs at taxpayer-funded Christian colleges and universities that explicitly discriminate against LGBTQ+ students, most of which are members of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCCU). Students were surveyed via the College Pulse mobile app and web portal, and weighted to be nationally representative of Christian colleges and universities.



Key takeaways include:

- **More than 1 in 10 students self-identify as a sexual minority.** Among those who attend Christian colleges and universities, 12% of students self-identify as non-heterosexual. With a broader definition that encompasses self-identification and any attraction or experience that is not between a heterosexual female and a heterosexual male, the number of non-heterosexual students more than doubles to approximately 30%.
- **Two percent of students identify as a gender minority.** When asked to select their gender, 2% of students identify as either non-binary, genderqueer, agender, transgender, or non-cisgender.
- **Most sexual and gender minority students are closeted.** One in five (19%) sexual minority students report telling no one about their sexual or gender identity. More than half (56%) have only told five or fewer people.
- **Nearly half of gender minority students say they do not feel like they belong on their campus.**
- **Gender minority students are seven times more likely to be sexually assaulted on their Christian campus than cisgender students (14% v. 2%).**
- **Sexual and gender minority students are 15 times more likely to report that their sexuality or gender identity has prevented them from feeling accepted by others on their college campus compared to their peers.** They are also more likely to say that their gender or sexual identity has prevented them from holding leadership positions, living on campus, and joining campus groups compared to their straight peers.
- **Sexual minority students are three times more likely to experience depression and anxiety compared to heterosexual students.** They are also three times more likely to have seriously considered suicide or had an eating disorder, and twice as likely to report loneliness compared to their straight peers.
- **Gender minority students are nearly five times more likely to experience bullying or harassment.** Five percent (5%) of cisgender students report bullying or harassment, while 1 in 5 (22%) gender minority students report bullying or harassment. Moreover, among students who have been bullied, 85% of those who self-identify as LGBTQ+ report that the bullying came from someone at their college or university.
- **LGBTQ+ students explicitly identify their sexual or gender identity as the source of their depression.** For example, 41% of both sexual and gender minority students say their



sexual identity is the source of their depression.

- **4 in 10 sexual minority students are uncomfortable with their sexual orientation on campus.** Among the students who report being uncomfortable with their sexual orientation at their college, 21% report being extremely uncomfortable.

The report, "The LGBTQ+ Student Divide: The State of Sexual and Gender Minority Students at Taxpayer-Funded Christian Colleges," details the full findings on these issues and others related to students' gender identity and sexual orientation on Christian college campuses today. Sexual and gender minority students' responses show marked divides between the experiences of LGBTQ+ students compared to their straight and cisgender peers. LGBTQ+ students experience more adverse events, more isolation, and less inclusion on their campuses, leaving them with starkly different mental health outcomes and college experiences than their straight peers.





## I. LGBTQ+ STUDENT POPULATION SIZE

More than one in ten students identify as a sexual minority.

Findings from the survey demonstrate that more than 1 in 10 students (12%) self-identify as non-heterosexual, that is, something other than straight<sup>1</sup>. While the majority (83%) of students in this survey identify as straight, 6% of students identify as bisexual, 5% are unsure or questioning their sexual identity, 2% of students identify as either gay or lesbian, and 2% identify as queer or same-sex attracted.

Of course, there are many ways to understand sexuality in addition to how a person self-identifies. Taking into account students who report same-sex attraction, a sexual experience with a person of the same sex, or who identify as something other than straight, we find that the percentage of students who are not strictly heterosexual is 30%.

Students in this survey clearly express angst over their sexual identities and their faith, as well as the teachings of their colleges. Says one bisexual female student at Corban University:

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*"I am not supposed to be what I am. Every day I live in sin just because I think the things I think. Christians talk about taking thoughts captive, dying to ourselves, putting off the old nature and putting on the new. I don't know how to do that with sexual orientation. I am convinced that the depths of who I am is sinful and abhorrent to God. I am also convinced God is real and I am required to live according to His laws. I don't want to think about my orientation because I'm worried people will think I'm a bandwagoner or making it up. Or worse, they will think I'm just a filthy sinner who has been corrupted by the world. There's no one on campus I'd trust to talk this through with them. I don't want to be called a worthless sinner any more than I already have."*

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This survey also reveals a small portion of students at Christian colleges who do not identify as a cisgender male or female, or do not report their gender identity aligning with the sex they were assigned at birth. Results show that 2% of students report a gender identity other than a cisgender "male" or "female," with the most frequent category being "non-binary." A small portion of students (1%) opted not to disclose their gender identity.

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<sup>1</sup> A recent study conducted by Gallup finds that 16% of people in Gen Z identify as something other than heterosexual <https://news.gallup.com/poll/329708/lgbt-identification-rises-latest-estimate.aspx>

## Incidence Rate of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

*More than 1 in 10 students attending a Christian College Identify as LGBTQ+*

	Percentage	Frequency
LGBTQ+ (based on self-identification only)	12%	346
LGBTQ+ (based on attraction only)	18%	530
LGBTQ+ (based on self-identification or attraction)	22%	656
LGBTQ+ (based on self-identification, sexual contact and attraction)	30%	899
Non-cisgender students*	2%	65
Straight and Cisgender students	70%	2101

\*Notes: All non-cisgender students in this sample identify as sexual minorities; 97% of students identified as male or female; 2% identified as either genderqueer, genderfluid, non-binary, intersex, demiboy, demigirl, questioning, or transgender; 1% chose not to disclose their gender.

Results from this survey show that many sexual minority students have not shared their gender or sexual identity widely with their peers on their college campus. For sexual minority students, 4 in 10 (39%) students have told two people or less about their sexual identity.

## LGBTQ+ Students' Sexual Identity on Campus

*Few LGBTQ+ students are "out" to friends, faculty, or administrators on campus*

	Percentage
Not known, I have not told anyone	19%
Known to just one or two people	18%
Known to three to five people	19%
Known to six to 10 people	12%
Known to 10 or more people	19%
I'm not sure	9%

Many students have not come out at all on campus, with 19% of students having chosen not to disclose their sexual or gender identity to anyone at their college.

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*"I feel very nervous to share the fact that I am not straight to anyone on campus. I feel that I will be judged. I've heard people say terrible things about the LGBTQ+ community on campus that makes me feel unwelcome as someone who is part of the LGBTQ+ community."* –Female student, Southeastern University

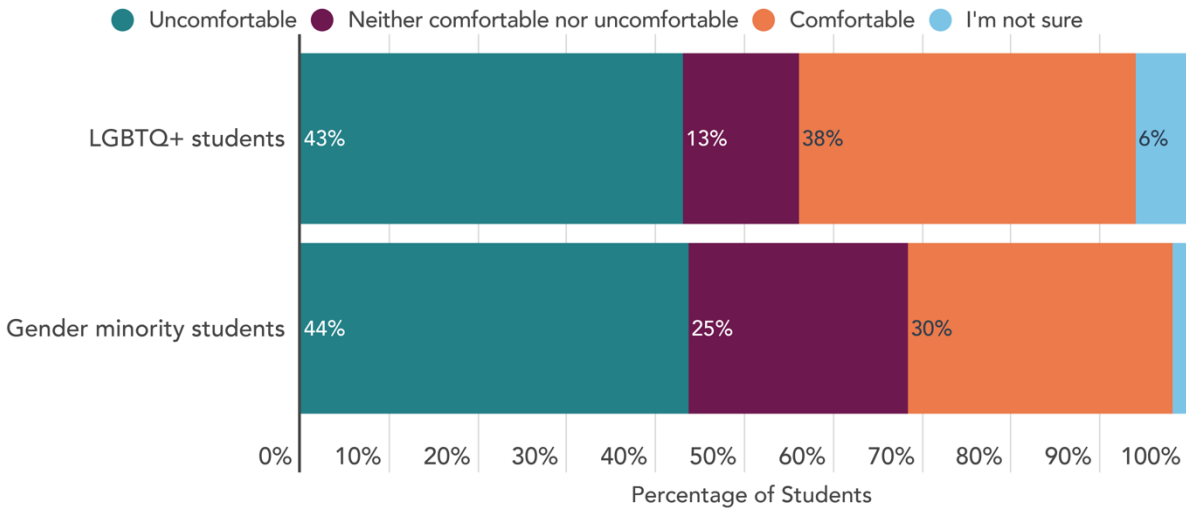
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Results show that 43% of sexual minority students report feeling uncomfortable, while only 38% are comfortable, and 13% say that they are neither comfortable nor uncomfortable. There is a

similar story for gender minority students, with only 30% of gender minority students feeling comfortable with their gender identity on campus, while 44% are uncomfortable.

### Comfort with Sexual Identity on Campus

Four in ten sexual or gender minority students are uncomfortable with their sexual identity on campus





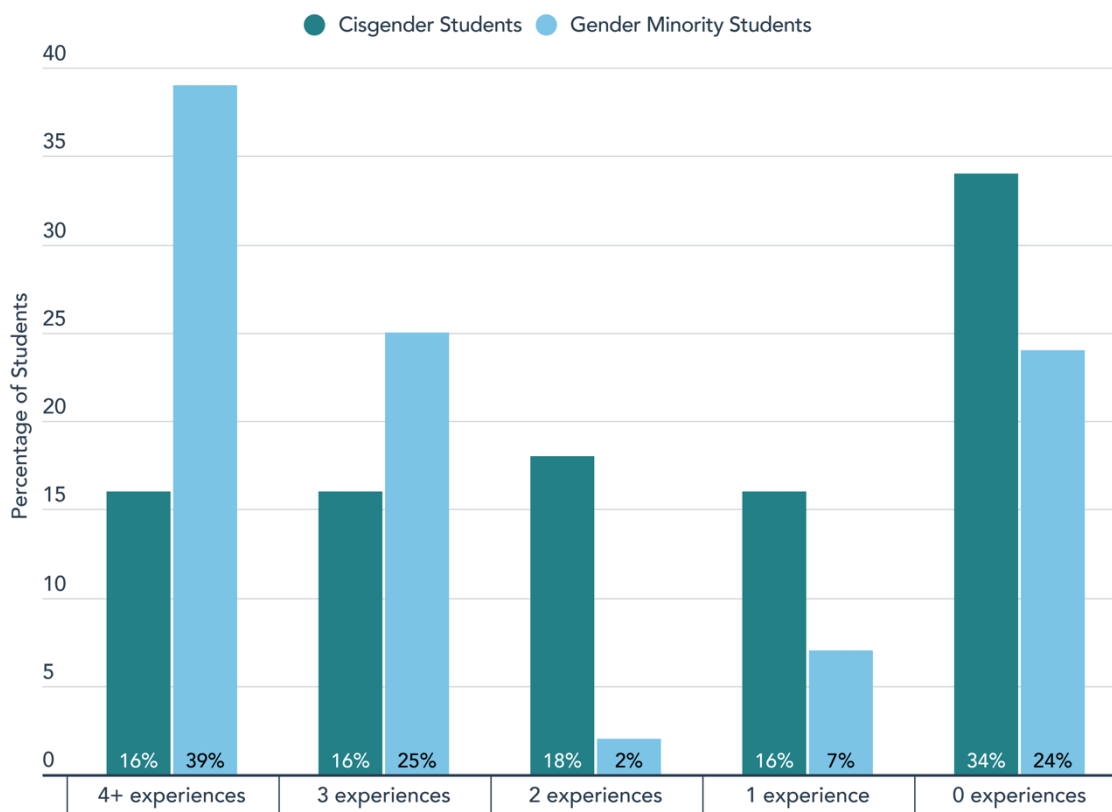
## II. THE GENDER MINORITY EXPERIENCE

Gender minority students have twice the adverse experiences as their fellow cisgender students

Gender minority students are seven times as likely to have survived a sexual assault and are five times more likely to have been bullied, harassed or contemplated suicide. Indeed, of the 11 items that this report analyzes (loneliness, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, bullying or harassment, alcohol use, drug or substance use, physical or sexual assault, sexual harassment, or an eating disorder), results show that 39% of gender minority students experienced four or more adverse conditions while only 16% of cisgender students experienced four or more.

### Number Of Adverse Experiences Among Cisgender And Gender Minority Students

*Gender minority students are significantly more likely to have adverse experiences compared to their straight peers*

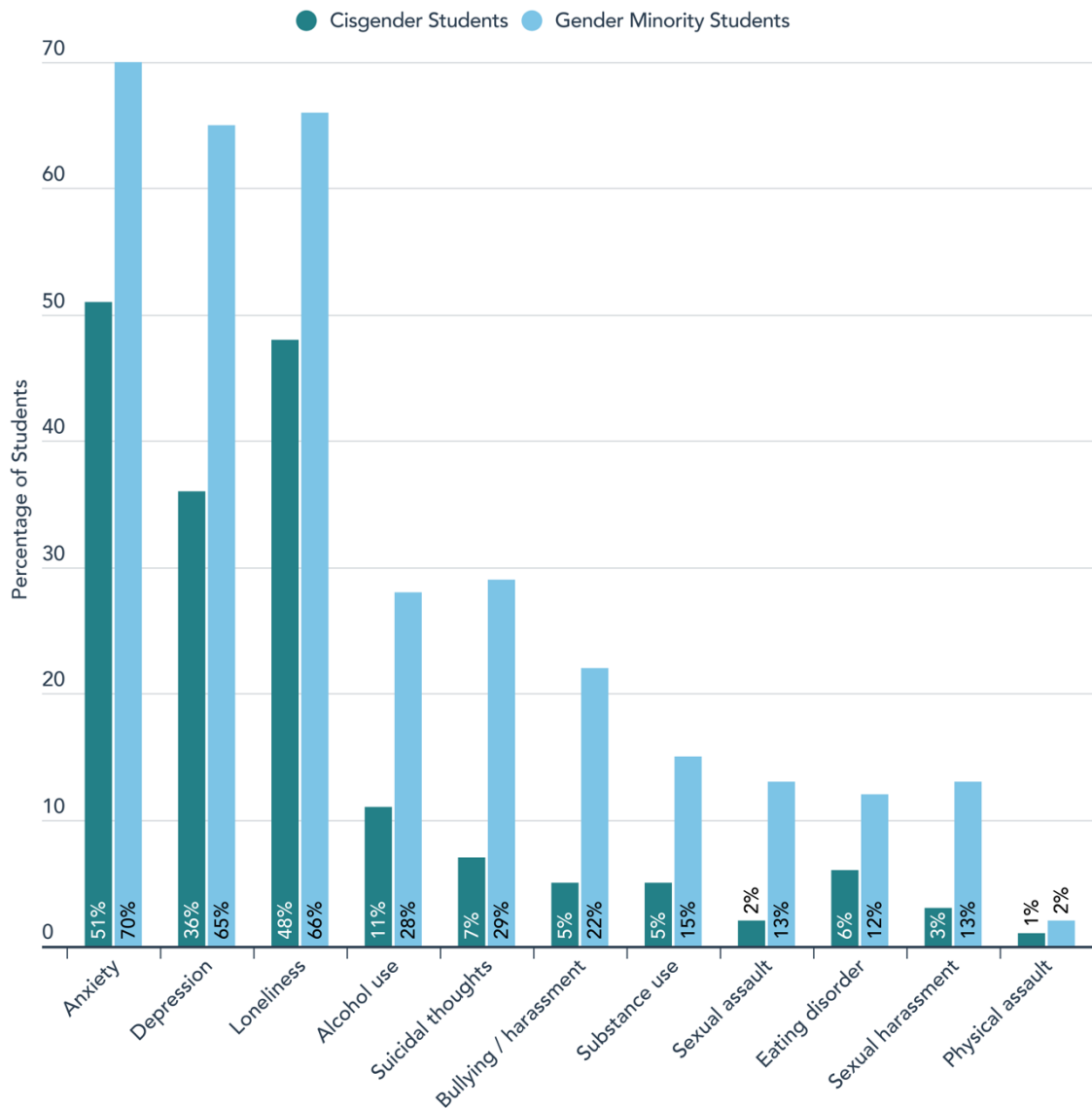


On average, gender minority students experience double the number of adverse experiences compared to their cisgender peers (3.6, compared to 1.8). Similar to sexual minority students, the types of adverse experiences gender minority students have most frequently include

anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Nearly 7 in 10 gender minority students report experiencing loneliness (70%) or depression (65%). Similarly, about one-third of gender minority students report having used alcohol (28%) or having had suicidal thoughts (29%) during their time at their college. This stands in stark contrast to their cisgender peers, for whom only 7% have seriously considered suicide. One in 5 (22%) gender minority students report being bullied during their college experience, and the majority (73%) of these students report the bullying coming from someone at their college.

### Adverse Experiences Among Gender Minority and Cisgender Students

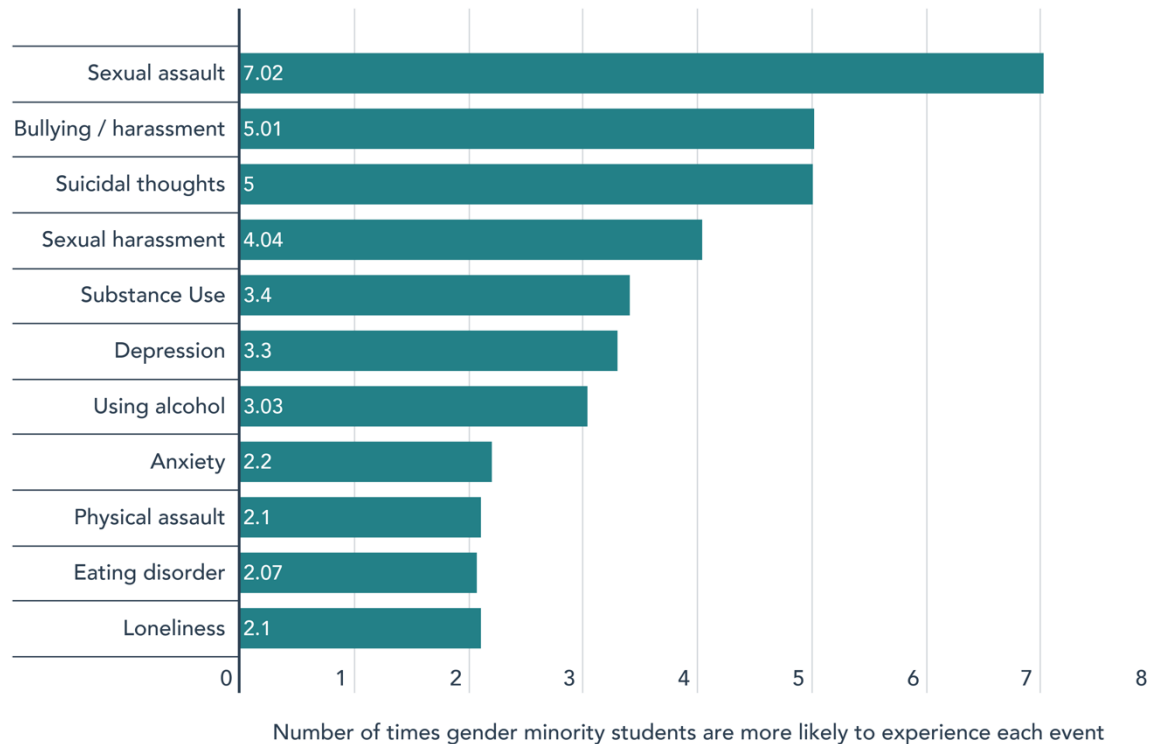
*Gender minority students are significantly more likely to experience all harms compared to their cisgender peers*



Across the board, gender minority students report experiencing more of these harms compared to their fellow cisgender students.

### Odds Ratios for Adverse Events Experienced by Gender Minority Students

*Gender minority students are nearly twice as likely to have negative personal experiences*



Put another way, gender minority students are significantly more likely to report having these negative experiences compared to their cisgender peers. For example, when it comes to sexual assault, gender minority students are seven times more likely to report a sexual assault compared to their fellow cisgender students. They are also five times more likely to report having been bullied and to have seriously considered suicide. Regardless of the metric, gender minority students report significantly more adverse events than students who identify with the sex they were assigned at birth.

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*"I feel extremely uncomfortable talking about my gender and sexual identity... I would definitely never recommend [my college] to anyone who was anything but a straight cis-gender person. I am also aware of an individual living on campus who is not allowed to live in the men's dorms because he is a trans man."* — **Questioning student, Roberts Wesleyan College**

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Gender minority students explicitly report that the cause of their depression, anxiety, and loneliness is due to their gender identity. The table below shows that when it comes to loneliness, about 3 in 10 (35%) gender minority students attribute their gender identity as one of the main drivers of their loneliness. Similarly, students who identify as something other than their birth sex report their gender identity as a contributor to their depression (39%) and anxiety (27%). While other factors contribute to their loneliness or anxiety (for example, about 80% of students report that academic stress contributes to their anxiety), gender minority students very intentionally identify their gender identity as a source of their adverse experiences.

### Sources of Loneliness, Depression, Anxiety and Bullying among Gender Minority and Cisgender students

*Gender identity directly contributes to feelings of loneliness, depression and anxiety*

	Loneliness		Depression		Anxiety		Bullying	
	Cisgender	Gender Minority	Cisgender	Gender Minority	Cisgender	Gender Minority	Cisgender	Gender Minority
<b>Gender identity</b>	2%	35%	2%	39%	2%	27%	8%	41%
<b>Sexual identity</b>	8%	44%	8%	41%	6%	29%	16%	45%
<b>Racial background</b>	7%	8%	7%	14%	6%	17%	22%	9%
<b>Academic Stress</b>	67%	63%	69%	59%	83%	67%	*	*
<b>Stress from home</b>	39%	51%	54%	65%	48%	77%	*	*
<b>Social stress</b>	62%	74%	60%	82%	58%	77%	*	*
<b>Romantic stress</b>	24%	26%	27%	28%	23%	22%	*	*
<b>Employment stress</b>	27%	39%	33%	48%	34%	65%	*	*
<b>Financial insecurity</b>	42%	64%	50%	79%	47%	79%	*	*
<b>Time management</b>	48%	36%	45%	45%	52%	59%	*	*

Notes: The asterisk (\*) denotes answer options that were not shown for this series of questions.

When it comes to bullying, one in five (22%) gender minority students report being bullied during their college tenure, and 41% of these students report that their gender identity is a contributor to the bullying they experienced.

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*"I feel that discussing my gender identity] would definitely result in instant stigma and no degree of support or understanding." — Demigirl student, Liberty University*

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### III. THE SEXUAL MINORITY EXPERIENCE

#### LGBTQ+ students report wholly inferior college experiences than their straight peers

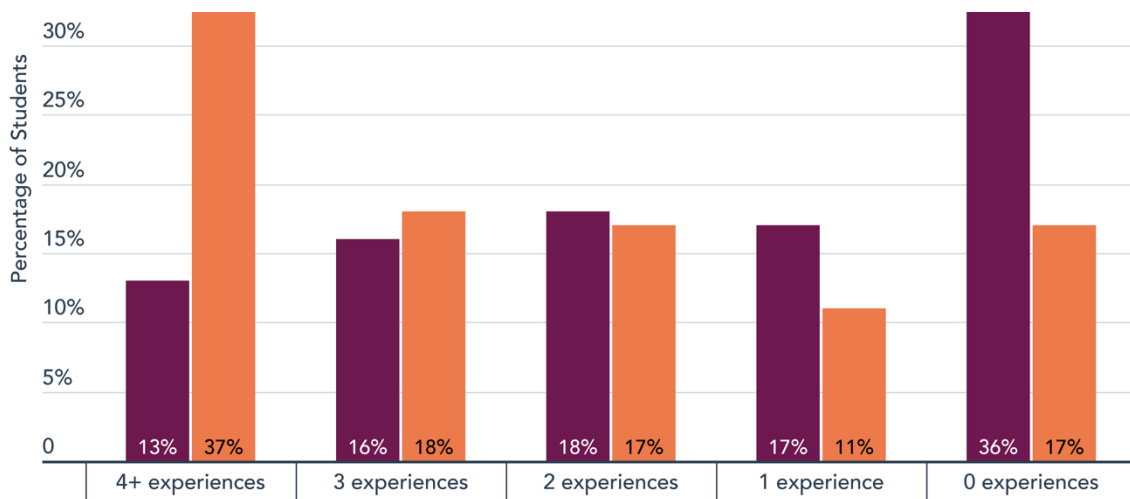
Prior research has shown that students face a significant amount of stress during their college years.<sup>2</sup> For many students, life during college includes increased academic workloads, living away from home from the first time, and more financial and social pressure, in addition to planning for their future careers. The results from this survey show, however, that sexual minority students are more likely than their straight peers to have a range of stressful and harmful experiences. Whether it is depression, anxiety, or an eating disorder, sexual minority students are much more likely to report personal challenges during their college years.

This survey polled students on whether they had experienced any of the following 11 adverse experiences during their time in college: loneliness, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, bullying or harassment, alcohol use, drug or substance use, physical or sexual assault, sexual harassment, or an eating disorder.

More than one-third (36%) of straight students report not experiencing any adverse experiences from this list. This number stands in stark contrast to sexual minority students — only 17% did not select a single item. On average, sexual minority students report having an average of 3.2 adverse experiences, compared to their straight counterparts who experience an average of 1.7.

#### Reported Adverse Experiences by Straight and Sexual Minority Students

*Sexual minority students are more likely to face more harms compared to straight peers*



Of all these negative experiences, anxiety is the most frequent. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of sexual minority students report feeling anxious at some point during their time at their college, compared to nearly half (49%) of their straight peers who experience anxiety. Loneliness and

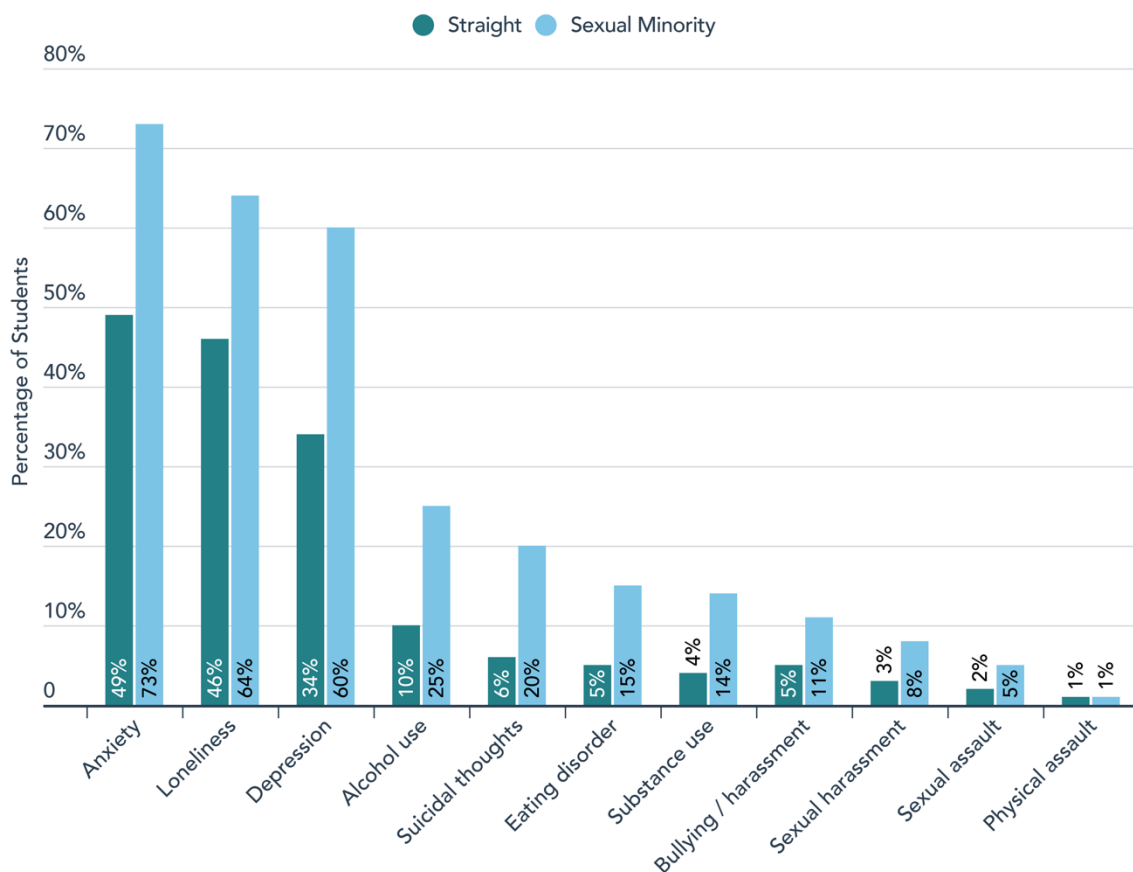
<sup>2</sup> ROSS, SHANNON E., et al. "SOURCES OF STRESS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS." College Student Journal, vol. 33, no. 2, 1999, p. 312. Gale Academic OneFile

depression round out the top three negative experiences, with more than half (64% and 60% respectively) of LGBTQ+ students reporting feelings of loneliness or depression during their college career.

Sexual minority students are also more likely to report experiencing harassment, bullying, and assault compared to their straight peers. Sexual minority students are more than twice as likely to report experiencing harassment and bullying and three times more likely to report having been the victim of sexual harassment or assault.

### Adverse Experiences Among LGBTQ+ and Straight Students

*Feelings of depression, anxiety and loneliness are more common among LGBTQ+ Students*



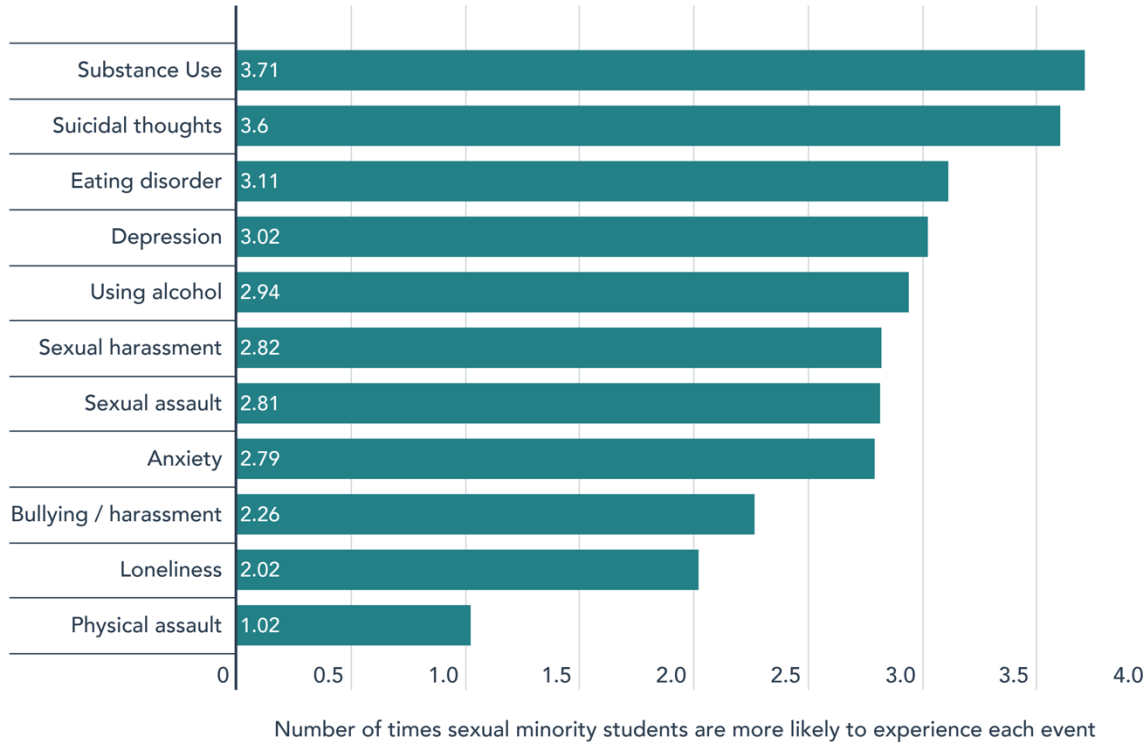
The following chart presents these adverse experiences in terms of odds ratios for LGBTQ+ students compared to heterosexual students. Odds ratios demonstrate how much more likely one outcome (e.g., depression) is for one group compared to another. For example, results show that sexual minority students are 3.7 times more likely than their straight peers to report using drugs or other substances,



and 3.6 times more likely to report having seriously considered suicide during their time at their college.<sup>3</sup>

### Odds Ratios for Adverse Events Experienced by Sexual Minority Students

*LGBTQ+ students are more likely to have adverse experiences compared to straight peers.*



Sexual minority students are three times more likely to experience an eating disorder or depression, and nearly three times (2.8 times) as likely to report having been sexually harassed at their college compared to straight students. LGBTQ+ students also report higher rates of sexual and physical assault, anxiety, and loneliness compared to their straight peers. In fact, sexual minority students are at more risk for every adverse experience this survey inquired about compared to their fellow straight students.

The survey also investigated sources of these negative experiences among LGBTQ+ students. It asked students to identify the aspects of their life that contributed to feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety. Sexual minority and straight students reported that academic stress, stress from home, and social stress all contributed to feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety. What is clear from the table below, however, is that LGBTQ+ students report their sexual identity is a key driver. Significant numbers of LGBTQ+ students say their sexual or gender identity is an important reason they feel lonely (48%), depressed (41%), or anxious (35%) at their college. For example, this female student from Wheaton College reflects on her experience navigating her sexual identity on campus:

<sup>3</sup> Results hold after controlling for race and gender.

*"Being queer at Wheaton College, even just trying to figure out my sexuality and my feelings, has made me feel extremely on edge almost always, especially around people who I fear may verbally harass me for my sexual orientation. Trying to navigate romantic feelings for a woman in this community culture has been one of the biggest contributors to my depression and anxiety. I understand the schools' need to include same-sex marriage as unacceptable in the community covenant because they are a Christian school and depend on donors who are anti-LGBTQ+, but it is disgustingly unfair that straight individuals are able to figure out relationships in open spaces and with Christian counselors and friends to talk to and be open with and to help them navigate relationships, and that I was unable to do that and instead had to live in secrecy and fear of reprimand for feelings of agape love that I had towards a woman."*

## Sources Of Loneliness, Depression, Anxiety And Bullying Among Sexual Minority And Straight Students

*Sexual and gender identity are sources of stress for sexual minority students*

	Loneliness		Depression		Anxiety		Bullying	
	Straight	Sexual Minority	Straight	Sexual Minority	Straight	Sexual Minority	Straight	Sexual Minority
Gender identity	1%	11%	2%	10%	2%	8%	8%	16%
Sexual identity	2%	48%	3%	41%	2%	35%	7%	62%
Racial background	8%	5%	8%	5%	6%	6%	24%	12%
Academic Stress	66%	72%	71%	60%	83%	76%	*	*
Stress from home	39%	44%	53%	59%	48%	51%	*	*
Social stress	62%	64%	60%	64%	57%	63%	*	*
Romantic stress	24%	20%	28%	23%	24%	22%	*	*
Employment stress	27%	31%	34%	35%	34%	39%	*	*
Financial insecurity	42%	51%	51%	50%	47%	49%	*	*
Time management	48%	49%	46%	39%	53%	49%	*	*

Notes: The asterisk (\*) denotes answer options that were not shown for this series of questions.

For students who report being bullied, 62% of sexual minority students report that one of the reasons they were bullied was due to their sexual identity. Of those sexual minority students who were bullied, 86% report that the bullying they experienced was perpetrated by someone at their college.

## EXPLORING THE GENDER GAP

LGBTQ+ women have inferior college experiences compared to straight, male peers

We can sometimes lose sight of the gaps in experiences when we take them piecemeal. Any single metric for health, well-being, exclusion or success does not provide a complete picture, but the variety of different questions designed to identify challenges faced by LGBTQ+ students provides a distinct pattern. LGBTQ+ students have very different college experiences from straight students. However, the experience gap is even wider when we consider the experiences of sexual minority females and their straight male peers.

When it comes to the adverse experiences that students have at college, we see that LGBTQ+ females report anxiety and depression at twice the rate of their straight male peers. Sexual minority females are also much more likely than their heterosexual male peers to report loneliness or isolation during their college years (63% vs. 40%), and specifically, these women call out that their loneliness is due to their sexual (47%) and gender identity (10%).

LGBTQ+ women are also particularly vulnerable to sexually aggressive acts, such as assault or harassment and experience such acts at significantly higher rates than their heterosexual male peers.

### Adverse Events Experienced by Straight Men and Women of Sexual Minority

*Women of sexual minority are significantly more likely to have inferior experiences during college compared to straight men*

Harms Experienced	Straight Men	Women of Sexual Minority
Anxiety	38%	77%
Depression	27%	63%
Feeling lonely or isolated	40%	63%
Using drugs or other substances	4%	15%
Sexual harassment	0%	7%
Sexual assault	0%	6%
Contributors to Loneliness		
My sexual identity / sexual orientation	0%	47%
My gender / gender identity	0%	10%



<b>Contributors to Anxiety</b>		
<b>My sexual identity / sexual orientation</b>	2%	32%
<b>Contributors to Bullying</b>		
<b>My sexual identity / sexual orientation</b>	9%	51%
<b>Sexual or Gender Identity Prevented You from Doing the Following:</b>		
<b>Feeling accepted by others at your college</b>	1%	43%
<b>Dating the person you want you</b>	1%	23%
<b>Living on campus</b>	1%	8%
<b>Becoming an officer of a club or other campus leadership position</b>	0%	8%
<b>Feeling comfortable eating in cafeterias</b>	0%	7%

LGBTQ+ women also experience significantly inferior college campus experiences compared to their straight male peers. For example, 43% of sexual minority females report that their sexual or gender identity has prevented them from feeling accepted on their college campus, and 23% agree that their sexual or gender identity has prevented them from dating who they want to. About 1 in 12 LGBTQ+ females report that their gender or sexual identity has prevented them from living on campus and holding leadership positions on campus.



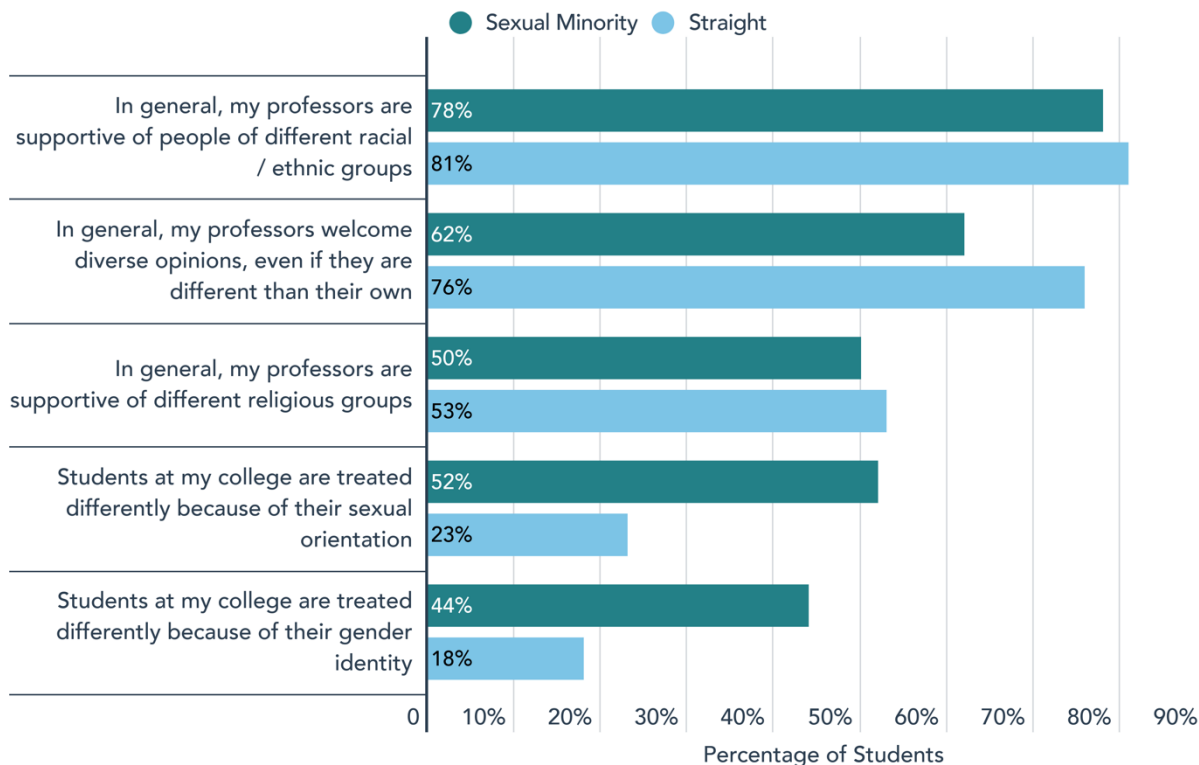
## IV. SENSE OF BELONGING

Nearly half (47%) of gender minority students feel that they don't belong at their Christian college

When it comes to their experiences in their classrooms and engaging in dialogue with their professors, straight students on Christian college campuses overwhelmingly believe (81%) that their professors are supportive of students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Half (50%) of sexual minority students agree that their professors are supportive of students of different faiths. However, there is a stark divide in the assessment of perceived acceptance of LGBTQ+ students on college campuses. For example, 52% of sexual minority students report that students are treated differently as a result of students' sexual orientation. Straight students have a considerably different view, with only 23% of straight students agreeing that their peers are treated differently as a result of their sexual orientation. A similar trend is present for sexual minority students who are more likely to report that students are treated differently based on gender identity compared to their straight peers (44% vs. 18%).

### Sense of Belonging Among Sexual Minority and Straight Students

*LGBTQ+ students less likely to feel supported by their university compared to their straight peers*



Results also show significant divergence between sexual minority and straight students. Students were asked to state their level of agreement with how much they feel as though they are welcome and included on their campus. Approximately 3 in 10 (29%) LGBTQ+ students say they feel as though they do not belong on campus. In comparison, only 17% of straight students feel the same. Gender minority students are most likely to feel as though they don't belong, with almost half (47%) saying so.

Sexual and gender minority students are also less likely to feel welcomed in the classroom. One in 3 (31%) LGBTQ+ students feel comfortable sharing their opinions in the classroom, compared to 42% of straight students. Students identifying as a gender minority are significantly more likely to feel uncomfortable sharing their opinions in class compared to their cisgender peers, with half (50%) saying so. Heterosexual students (52%) are more likely to feel as though their perspectives are welcome in class, with only 31% of LGBTQ+ students agreeing with this sentiment.

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*"I have often experienced that people will [look] down on me for mentioning any queer-related activity. I am a female-presenting person with a boyfriend. However in the past I have had more explicitly queer relationships. I have been outed for this by some non-accepting individuals. It has made it difficult to get along with others and it drove me out of my dorm. I feel safe as long as no one knows." — **Non-binary student, Houston Baptist University***

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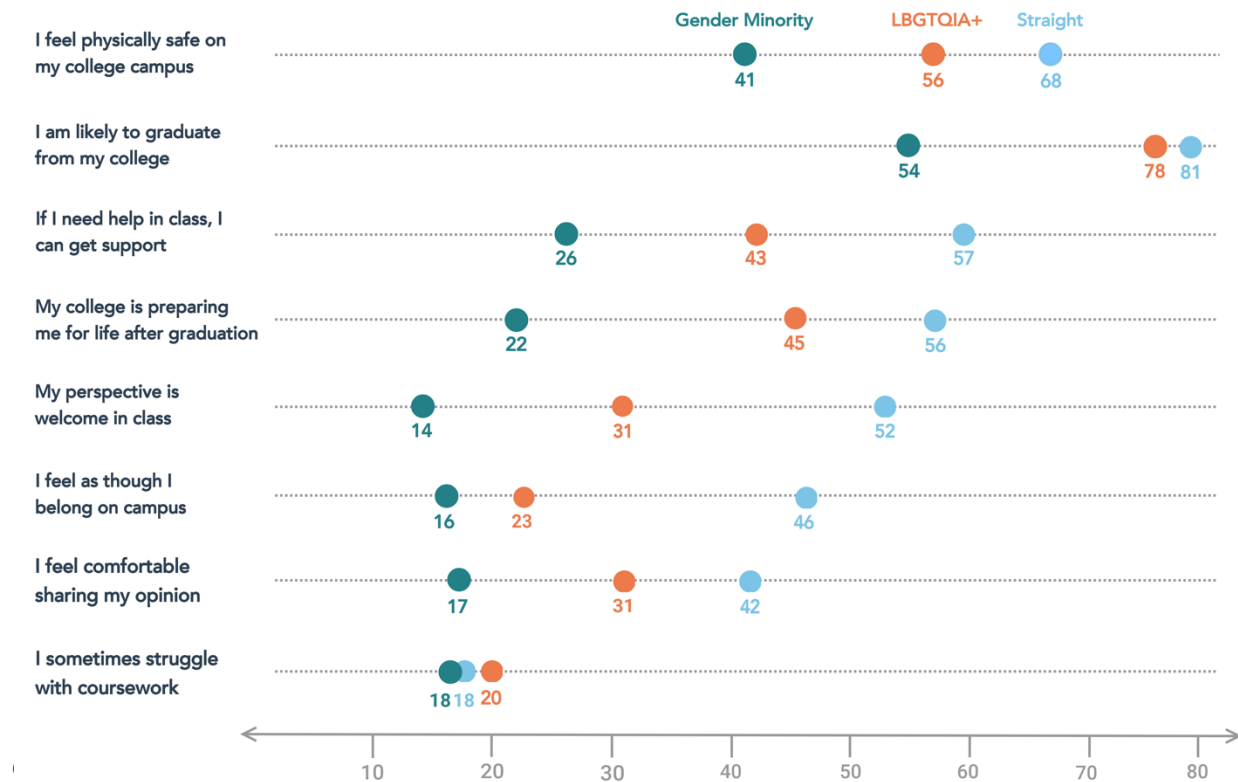
Students self-identifying as a gender minority are also most likely to feel like outsiders on their campus. Aside from not feeling as welcomed in the classroom compared to their cisgender classmates, sexual minority students are also more likely to feel unsafe on their campus compared to cisgender peers (41% vs. 68%).

In terms of being prepared for life beyond college, LGBTQ+ students are about as likely to say that they are likely to graduate from their college compared to straight students (78% vs. 81%). But gender minority students are much less likely to agree, with only 54% believing they will graduate from their college. Gender minority students are also far less likely to agree that their college is preparing them well for life after graduation compared to their straight peers (22% vs. 56%).



## Level of Perceived Support from College

*Gender minority students are less likely to feel supported by their college compared to both sexual minority and straight students*



A major aspect of the college experience and personal growth occurs outside of the classroom. When it comes to critical facets of college life, such as socializing, intramural activities, and daily living arrangements, LGBTQ+ students are much more likely to report feeling limited—that their gender or sexual identity has prevented them from fully experiencing college. For example, more than 4 in 10 (43%) LGBTQ+ students report that their gender or sexual identity has prevented them from feeling accepted by others at their college, and one-quarter (25%) of sexual minority students report that they are unable to date who they want to at their college. About 1 in 10 (12%) sexual minority students also report that they are unable to join clubs on campus. The theme of feeling unwelcome or feeling restricted from participating in on-campus organizations, and clubs, features prominently:

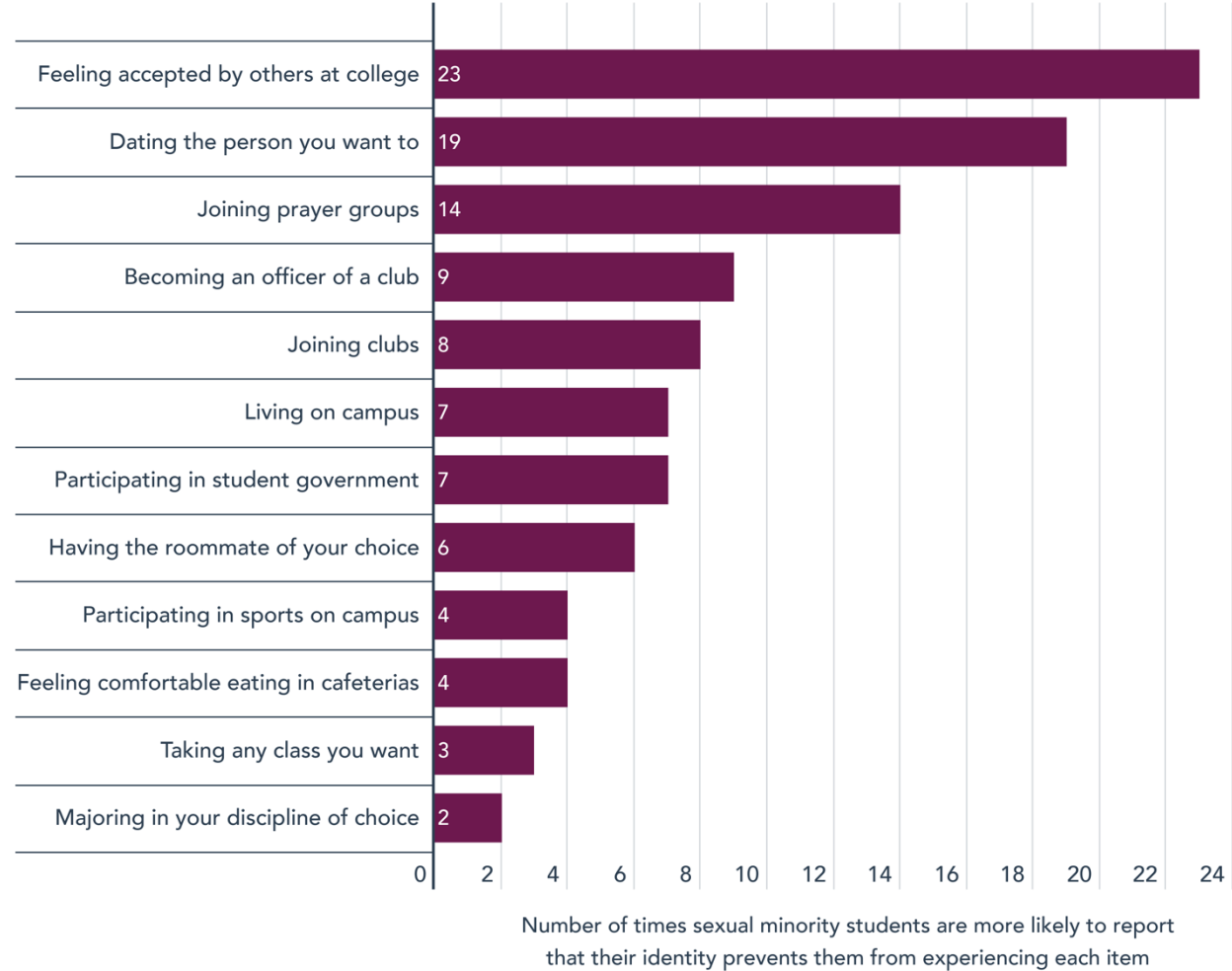
*"[I] feel unwelcomed by professors and staff. An LGBTQIA+ club was not supported by [our] institution. Protest was held by students." — Bisexual female, Asuza Pacific University*

*"I think that Baylor University does an awful job as a school to make their LGBTQIA+ students feel safe and welcomed. Not only do they refuse to charter the Baylor GAY club, which is unfair because it is about representation, but they also have not changed their Human Sexuality statement. Because of the person I am, I am proud to be a lesbian and am very open about it. However mostly everyone else I know who is also LGBTQIA+ here does not feel the same way. I still feel discriminated against and it hurts." — Lesbian student, Baylor*

*"The LGBT+ club has more restrictions than other clubs and the religious atmosphere promotes discrimination by the students and through the higher-up campus institutions. Overall I would not recommend [this school] to those questioning their gender or sexual identity." — Lesbian student, Pepperdine University*

On-Campus Participation Among Sexual Minority Students

*Sexual minority students are significantly more likely to report that their gender or sexual identity prevents them from participating fully in campus life*



## On Campus Participation Among Sexual Minority, Gender Minority, And Straight Students

*Sexual and gender minority students more likely to report not being able to fully participate in college life than their heterosexual and cisgender peers*

	Sexual Minority	Gender Minority	Straight
Feeling accepted by others	43%	48%	4%
Dating who you want to	25%	30%	2%
Joining clubs	12%	14%	2%
Joining prayer groups	11%	14%	1%
Having the roommate of your choice	9%	4%	2%
Living on campus	9%	14%	2%
Becoming an officer in leadership positions	8%	8%	1%
Feeling comfortable eating in cafeterias	7%	14%	2%
Taking classes you want	4%	19%	2%
Participating in student government	4%	3%	1%
Participating in sports	3%	8%	1%
Choosing your major	2%	9%	1%
None of these	48%	32%	91%

Gender minority students are nearly 20 times more likely to report that their sexual or gender identity prevented them from dating the person that they want to compared to their cisgender peers, and 17 times more likely to say that their identity has prevented them from feeling accepted at their college. Gender minority students are nearly 10 times more likely to report that their gender has held them back from participating in campus life, such as joining clubs on campus or becoming an officer in one, compared to cisgender students.

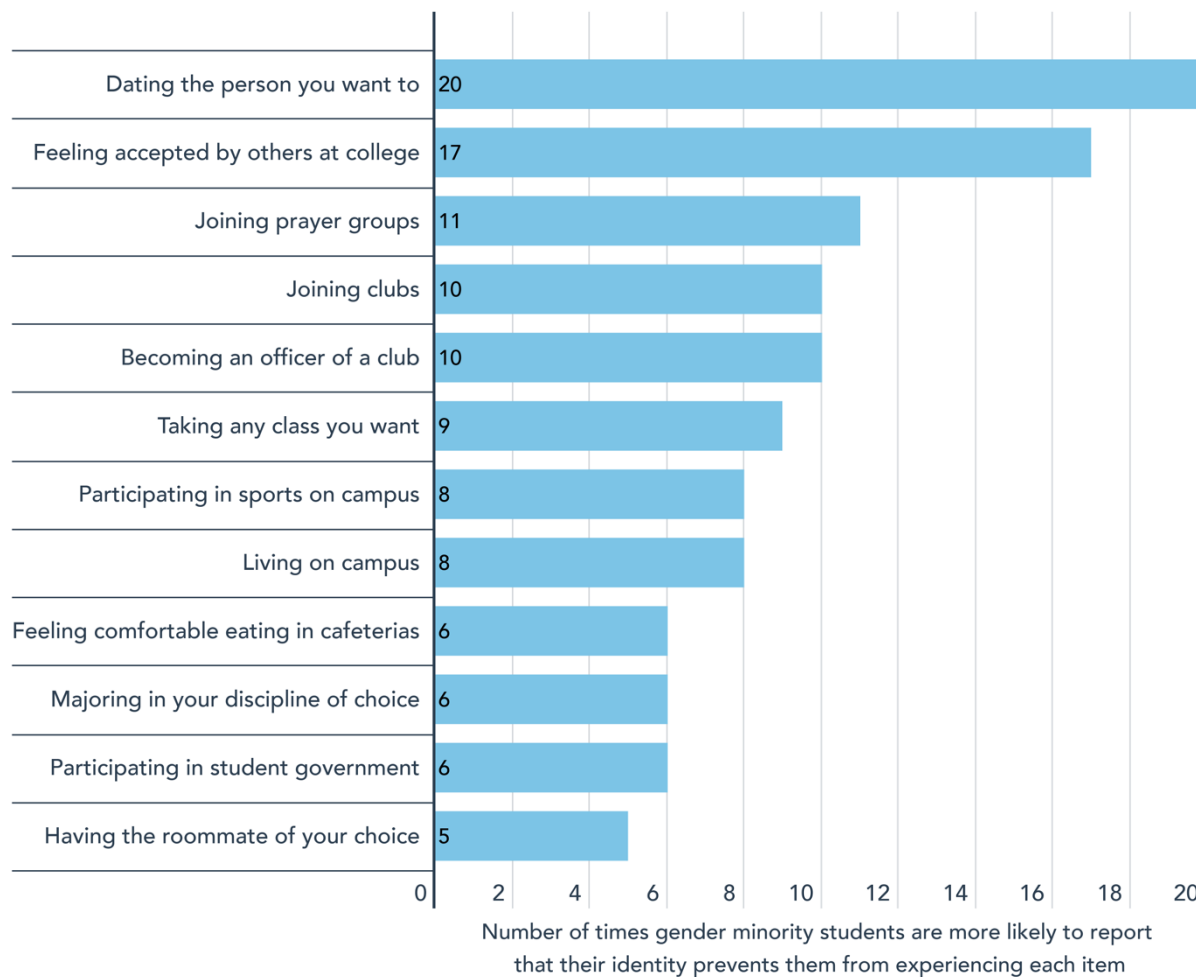
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*"I am a gay woman (she/they) and a senior in undergrad. I entered into undergrad as a [closeted] gay ministry major but soon found that I was definitely not going to receive any support were I to come out to my ministry friends. 90% of my Bible professors talked openly about homosexuality being a 'sin' and I just had to sit there and listen to the class discuss whether or not I deserve rights. It was awful. Then I switched to being an education major with a concentration in English." — Lesbian and Polyamorous student, Hope International University*

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### On-Campus Participation Among Gender Minority Students

*Gender minority students are significantly more likely to report that their gender or sexual identity prevents them from partaking in on-campus activities*



On a very deep and visceral level, sexual and gender minority students report that they are less likely to fully participate in campus life. They also feel less supported by the campus community and administration. Nearly half (48%) of straight students say their college supports them, while only about one-third (36%) of LGBTQ+ students say the same.

## V. UNIVERSITY SANCTIONS

Gender and sexual minority students are more likely to face university sanctions for their sexual or gender identity

When asked whether or not their college or university had ever taken formal actions against them for their sexual or gender identity, the majority of gender and sexual minority students report this has not happened. Nine in 10 (91%) straight students report that their college has not taken any action against them in regards to their sexual or gender identity. However, among sexual minority students, that number decreases to 88%. Similarly, gender minority students are more likely to say their college or university has taken action against them due to their sexual or gender identity, with only three-quarters (73%) of students saying they faced no repercussions.

### University-led Discipline due to Sexual or Gender Identity

*Sexual and gender minority students face suggested counseling from their college because of their sexual or gender identity*

	Sexual Minority Students	Gender Minority Students
<b>Suggested counseling</b>	6%	8%
<b>Suggested sexual orientation change efforts</b>	4%	8%
<b>Suggested gender identity change efforts</b>	1%	7%
<b>Required sexual orientation change efforts</b>	1%	3%
<b>Mandatory meeting with RA or administrator</b>	1%	2%
<b>Received a bad grade in a class</b>	1%	2%
<b>Disciplinary action</b>	0%	2%
<b>Scholarships or financial aid revoked</b>	0%	2%
<b>Loss of on-campus housing</b>	0%	2%
<b>Required counseling</b>	0%	2%
<b>Not allowed to attend on-campus events</b>	0%	2%

In fact, gender minority students are the most likely to report facing all of the disciplinary actions listed in the survey. Among students who have faced disciplinary action related to their gender or sexual identity, 7% of gender minority students say their school suggested gender identity



change efforts. Gender minority students are also twice as likely as sexual minority students to say their school suggested sexual orientation change efforts (8% vs. 4%), and three times as likely to say their school required sexual orientation change efforts (3% vs. 1%).

It is worth noting that reports of university sanctions may be slightly depressed, for students fear the consequences of what would happen to their status if their gender or sexual identity should be revealed. For many LGBTQ+ students whose identity is not known on campus, concealing their true identity is a strategy to preserve their housing, scholarships or even the ability to attend their college. Says one closeted student,

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*"I feel no support whatsoever and feel physically unsafe if it were to become public knowledge. I only share my orientation to those that I know for sure are also LGBT+. I have overheard people saying, "hang the f\*gs and let them burn." I have several friends forced into the wrong gender dorms and there have been multiple classes that have entire units condemning anyone not cisgender and straight. I know this will not change. I do not have the money to move out of state and receive good scholarships from the university." — Questioning student, Liberty University*

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## CONCLUSION

LGBTQ+ students are a significant part of the student body of every college and university, including at taxpayer-funded religious colleges and universities where they are explicitly discriminated against. The survey data reveal stark contrasts in mental health and student experience outcomes for sexual and gender minority students at these institutions.

Every student deserves a safe campus environment in which to learn and grow. Every parent wants this for their child, and every child needs this in order to flourish. Unfortunately, Christian colleges and universities that explicitly discriminate against LGBTQ+ students are not providing a safe campus environment for a large percentage of their student body. A review of campus policies and procedures by higher education leaders, administrators, policymakers and accreditation bodies may lead to more safe and affirming campus climates for this vulnerable student population.

Moreover, the experiences of sexual and gender minority students at taxpayer-funded religious colleges and universities may have important implications for religious exemptions to civil rights statutes like Title IX and the debates surrounding the Equality Act.



## METHODOLOGY

The survey was designed and conducted by College Pulse at the request of the Religious Exemption Accountability Project. The survey was fielded January 28 - February 6, 2021 and comes from a sample of 3,000 undergraduates who are currently enrolled full-time in four-year degree programs at taxpayer-funded Christian colleges and universities, most of which are members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). The students from this sample come from 134 universities in the United States. The margin of error for the U.S. undergraduate population is +/- 1 percentage point, and the margin of error for college student sub-demographics range from 2-5 percentage points. The final data set was weighted to ensure that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the target populations using the Current Population Survey (CPS) and other benchmarks.

The initial sample was drawn from College Pulse's American College Student Panel™ that includes more than 485,000 verified undergraduate students representing more than 1,000 two- and four-year colleges and universities in all 50 states. Panel members are recruited by a number of methods to help ensure student diversity in the panel population, including web advertising, permission-based email campaigns, and partnerships with university-affiliated organizations.

College Pulse uses a two-stage validation process to ensure that all its surveys include only students currently enrolled in four-year colleges or universities. Students are required to provide an .edu email address to join the panel and verify that they are currently enrolled either part-time or full-time in a two- or four-year degree program. All invitations to complete surveys are sent using the student's .edu email address or through notification in the College Pulse App that is available on iOS and Android platforms.

We apply a post-stratification adjustment based on demographic distributions from multiple data sources, including the 2017 Current Population Survey (CPS), the 2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), and the 2017-18 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The post-stratification weight rebalances the sample based on a number of important benchmark attributes, such as race, gender, class year, voter registration status, and financial aid status. The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IPF) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables. Weights are trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results.

The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the target populations. Even with these adjustments, surveys may be subject to error or bias due to question wording, context, and order effects.

For more information on our methodology, please visit <https://collegepulse.com/methodology>.



**COLLEGE EXPERIENCES SURVEY TOPLINE**  
**N=3001 COLLEGE STUDENTS**

- Q.1 Thank you for participating in our survey. Please read the following message:
- Q.2 Thinking about your experience at {{it.userSchool}}, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: **\*\*I feel as though I belong on my college campus\*\***
- |      |                            |
|------|----------------------------|
| 9%   | Strongly disagree          |
| 10%  | Somewhat disagree          |
| 9%   | Neither agree nor disagree |
| 28%  | Somewhat agree             |
| 44%  | Strongly agree             |
| 0%   | Refused                    |
| 100% | Total                      |
- Q.3 Thinking about your experience at {{it.userSchool}}, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: **\*\*I feel comfortable sharing my opinions in class\*\***
- |      |                            |
|------|----------------------------|
| 5%   | Strongly disagree          |
| 11%  | Somewhat disagree          |
| 9%   | Neither agree nor disagree |
| 34%  | Somewhat agree             |
| 41%  | Strongly agree             |
| 0%   | Refused                    |
| 100% | Total                      |
- Q.4 Thinking about your experience at {{it.userSchool}}, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: **\*\*My perspective is welcome in my classes\*\***



4%	Strongly disagree
7%	Somewhat disagree
10%	Neither agree nor disagree
29%	Somewhat agree
50%	Strongly agree
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.5 Thinking about your experience at {{it.userSchool}}, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: **\*\*I feel physically safe on my college campus\*\***

2%	Strongly disagree
4%	Somewhat disagree
8%	Neither agree nor disagree
19%	Somewhat agree
66%	Strongly agree
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.6 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: **\*\*I sometimes struggle with my coursework\*\***

5%	Strongly disagree
13%	Somewhat disagree
16%	Neither agree nor disagree
47%	Somewhat agree
18%	Strongly agree
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.7 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:



**\*\*If I need help in my classes, I can get the support I need\*\***

2%	Strongly disagree
3%	Somewhat disagree
8%	Neither agree nor disagree
31%	Somewhat agree
56%	Strongly agree
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.8 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
**\*\*I am likely to graduate from my college\*\***

2%	Strongly disagree
2%	Somewhat disagree
5%	Neither agree nor disagree
10%	Somewhat agree
81%	Strongly agree
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.9 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
**\*\*My college is preparing me well for my next steps in life (e.g., graduate school or a job in my field)\*\***

3%	Strongly disagree
5%	Somewhat disagree
10%	Neither agree nor disagree
28%	Somewhat agree
55%	Strongly agree
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.10



Considering your experience on your college campus, which of the following, if any, are true for you? [Select up to 5 options]

25% Students at my college are treated differently because of their sexual orientation

52% In general, my professors are supportive of different religious groups

81% In general, my professors are supportive of people of different racial / ethnic groups

20% Students at my college are treated differently because of their gender identity

74% In general, my professors welcome diverse opinions, even if they are different than their own

5% None of these

0% Refused

Q.11 During your time at {{it.userSchool}}, have you experienced any of the following? [Select up to 14 options]

48% Feeling lonely or isolated

52% Anxiety

36% Depression

8% Seriously considered attempting suicide

6% Being bullied or harassed (either online or in person)

12% Using alcohol

5% Using drugs or other substances

1% Physical assault

2% Sexual assault

3% Sexual harrassment

6% Anorexia, bulimia, or another eating disorder

5% Disciplinary action from your college or university

34% None of these

0% Refused

Q.12





You previously mentioned using alcohol. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have 4 or more drinks of alcohol within a couple of hours?

Question only shown to students who:

(1) Answered "Using alcohol" to "During your time at {{it.userSchool}}, have you experienced any of the following?"

54%	0 days
12%	1 day
12%	2 days
9%	3 to 5 days
5%	6 to 9 days
2%	10 to 19 days
3%	20 or more days
3%	I'm not sure
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.13 You mentioned earlier that you experienced a disciplinary action from your college. What was the primary reason for the disciplinary action against you?

Question only shown to students who:

(1) Answered "Disciplinary action from your college or university" to "During your time at {{it.userSchool}}, have you experienced any of the following?"

2%	Social media use
11%	Academic reasons
27%	General code of conduct
17%	Alcohol/drug use
12%	Sexual code of conduct
6%	I'm not sure
26%	Something else
0%	Refused



100% Total

Q.14 What was the disciplinary action you experienced?

[Select up to 11 options]

Question only shown to students who:

(1) Answered "Disciplinary action from your college or university" to "During your time at {{it.userSchool}}, have you experienced any of the following?"

19%	Monetary fine
39%	A warning
12%	Temporary suspension
49%	Required meeting with an administrator
8%	Community service
21%	Academic probation
0%	Permanent expulsion
12%	Mandatory counseling
3%	I'm not comfortable saying
13%	Something else
2%	None of these
0%	Refused

Q.15 You mentioned experiencing loneliness or isolation. During the past 4 weeks, how often have you felt lonely or isolated?

Question only shown to students who:

(1) Answered "Feeling lonely or isolated" to "During your time at {{it.userSchool}}, have you experienced any of the following?"

6%	Never
19%	Rarely
38%	Sometimes
20%	Often
14%	Very often
1%	I'm not sure
3%	Something else



0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.16 During the past 4 weeks, what contributed to why you experienced loneliness or isolation? [Select up to 12 options]

Question only shown to students who:

(1) Answered "Feeling lonely or isolated" to "During your time at {{it.userSchool}}, have you experienced any of the following?"

(2) Did not answer "Never" or "I'm not sure" to "You mentioned experiencing loneliness or isolation. During the past 4 weeks, how often have you felt lonely or isolated?"

67%	Academic stress
40%	Stress from home
7%	My racial background/identity
3%	My gender/gender identity
8%	My sexual identity/sexual orientation
62%	Social stress
24%	Romantic or partner(s) stress
27%	Employment/unemployment
43%	Financial insecurity
48%	Time management
8%	I'm not sure
12%	Other
0%	Refused

Q.17 You mentioned experiencing depression. During the past 4 weeks, how often have you felt depressed?

Question only shown to students who:

(1) Answered "Depression" to "During your time at {{it.userSchool}}, have you experienced any of the following?"

8%	Never
19%	Rarely



35%	Sometimes
22%	Often
15%	Very often
1%	I'm not sure
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.18 During the past 4 weeks, have any of the following contributed to your experience with depression? [Select up to 12 options]

Question only shown to students who:

(1) Answered "Depression" to "During your time at {{it.userSchool}}, have you experienced any of the following?"

(2) Did not answer "Never" or "I'm not sure" to "You mentioned experiencing depression. During the past 4 weeks, how often have you felt depressed?"

"

69%	Academic stress
54%	Stress from home
8%	My racial background/identity
3%	My gender/gender identity
9%	My sexual identity/sexual orientation
60%	Social stress
27%	Romantic or partner(s) stress
34%	Employment/unemployment
51%	Financial insecurity
45%	Time management
9%	I'm not sure
9%	Other
0%	Refused

Q.19 You mentioned experiencing anxiety. During the past 4 weeks, how often have you experienced anxiety?

Question only shown to students who:

(1) Answered "Anxiety" to "During your time at {{it.userSchool}}, have you



experienced any of the following?"

4%	Never
13%	Rarely
32%	Sometimes
27%	Often
24%	Very often
1%	I'm not sure
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.20 During the past 4 weeks, have any of the following contributed to your experience with anxiety? [Select up to 13 options]

Question only shown to students who:

(1) Answered "Anxiety" to "During your time at {{it.userSchool}}, have you experienced any of the following?"

(2) Did not answer "Never" or "I'm not sure" to "You mentioned experiencing anxiety. During the past 4 weeks, how often have you experienced anxiety?"

82%	Academic stress
48%	Stress from home
6%	My racial background/identity
3%	My gender/gender identity
7%	My sexual identity/sexual orientation
58%	Social stress
23%	Romantic or partner(s) stress
35%	Employment/unemployment
47%	Financial insecurity
52%	Time management
6%	I'm not sure
8%	Other
0%	Refused

Q.21



During the past year, how often have you been bullied or harassed (in person or online)? Count being bullied through texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media.

Question only shown to students who:

(1) Answered "Being bullied or harassed (either online or in person)" to "During your time at {{it.userSchool}}, have you experienced any of the following?"

15%	Never
33%	Rarely
37%	Sometimes
8%	Often
5%	Very often
2%	I'm not sure
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.22 Did this bullying or harassment come from someone at your college?

Question only shown to students who:

(1) Answered "Being bullied or harassed (either online or in person)" to "During your time at {{it.userSchool}}, have you experienced any of the following?"

(2) Did not answer "Never" or "I'm not sure" to "During the past year, how often have you been bullied or harassed (in person or online)? Count being bullied through texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media."

78%	Yes
13%	No
10%	I'm not sure
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.23 Did any of the following contribute to why you experienced bullying or harassment (in person or online)? [Select up to 7 options]

Question only shown to students who:

(1) Answered "Being bullied or harassed (either online or in person)" to "During your time at {{it.userSchool}}, have you experienced any of the following?"



(2) Did not answer "Never" or "I'm not sure" to "During the past year, how often have you been bullied or harassed (in person or online)? Count being bullied through texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media."

22%	My racial background/identity
9%	My gender/gender identity
17%	My sexual identity/sexual orientation
35%	I'm not sure
36%	Other
0%	Refused

Q.24 Do you think your gender or sexual identity has prevented you from doing any of the following at your college? [Select up to 13 options]

1%	Majoring in your discipline of choice
2%	Taking any class you want
3%	Joining clubs
5%	Dating the person you want to
8%	Feeling accepted by others at your college
2%	Joining prayer groups
2%	Becoming an officer of a club or other campus leadership positions
1%	Participating in sports on campus
1%	Participating in student government
2%	Having the roommate of your choice
3%	Feeling comfortable eating in cafeterias
2%	Living on campus
1%	Something else
86%	None of these
0%	Refused

Q.25 During the past 12 months, where did you usually sleep?

55%	In on-campus housing or a dorm
-----	--------------------------------



19%	In off-campus housing or a dorm/apartment/house
21%	In my parent's or guardian's home
2%	In the home of a friend, family member, or other relative
<1%	In a shelter or emergency housing
<1%	In a motel or hotel
<1%	In a car, park, campground, or other public place
<1%	I do not have a usual place to sleep (e.g., couch surfing or staying with different friends)
2%	Something else
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.26 How stable do you consider your housing situation to be?

71%	Very stable
22%	Somewhat stable
4%	Somewhat unstable
3%	Very unstable
1%	I'm not sure
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.27 People are different in their sexual attraction to other people. Which statement best describes your feelings?

47%	I am only attracted to men
7%	I am mostly attracted to men
3%	I am equally attracted to men and women
4%	I am mostly attracted to women
34%	I am only attracted to women
2%	Gender or gender identity is not relevant to who I am attracted to
<1%	I am attracted to non-binary/agender people
2%	I am not sure





0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.28 During your life, with whom have you had sexual contact? [Select up to 9 options]

47%	I have never had sexual contact
22%	Women
26%	Men
<1%	Trans women
<1%	Trans men
1%	Non-binary individuals
<1%	Other gender identity
9%	I don't feel comfortable saying
0%	Refused





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EXHIBIT B